THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED) : (a) and (b) Government have seen the news item which appeared in the 'Hindustan Times' of 2nd August, 1993 with the caption "Qureshi : Pak can make nuclear bomb", quoting Pakistan's Caretaker Prime Minister Moeen Qureshi to the effect that Pakistan can manufacture a nuclear device whenever needed.

Government are aware of the pursuit of a clandestine and weapons-oriented nuclear programme by Pakistan and its implications for India's and regional security and stability have been conveyed to all concerned.

(c) Government have also seen reports regarding the commencement of construction work on a nuclear power plant in Pakistan at Chashma with Chinese assistance. China and Pakistan had signed an agreement on 31-12-1991 for the supply of a 300 MW nuclear power plant by China to Pakistan to be installed at Chashma.

(d) Government keep under constant review all developments having a bearing on India's security and take appropriate measures to safeguard the national interest.

India's Cultural Links with Central Asian Countries

3897. SHRI SHANKAR DAYAL SINGH : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to an article by the noted analyst Sh. K. P. Nayar published in Economic Times of 25th June, 1993 that India has not taken sufficient care to nurture our cultural links with Central Asian Countries;

(b) if so, what is the reaction of the Government thereto; and

(c) what steps are being initiated in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED) : (a) to (c) Government have taken a number of measures for strengthening cultural relations with the Central Asian Republics. Framework agreements have been signed for the development of cultural ties with Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrghyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan and Cultural Exchange Programme have also been signed with Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrghyzstan and Turkemenistan. A Cultural Exchange Programme with Tajikistan is being finalised. It is proposed to open Indian Cultural Centres at Tashkent (Uzbekistan) and Almaty (Kazakhstan).

Indian Burnt to Death in USA

3898. CHOWDHRY HARI SINGH : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to Newsitem of Hindustan Times, New Delhi, dated 9th August, 1993, captioned 'Indian Burnt to death in USA';

(b) if so, what steps Government have taken about the case; and

(c) what are the full facts of the above case ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Government are monitoring developments in this case which is still under investigation.

(c) An Indian student from Andhra Pradesh, Srinivas Chirukuri, succumbed to burn injuries on July 26. Srinivas Chirukuri had reportedly told the University of Nevada at Las Vegas (UNLV) Police Department Detectives before lapsing into unconsciousness that two men had broken into the lab where he had been working, doused him with an inflammable liquid and set him on fire. This led to speculation whether this Indian student had been a victim of a hate crime or an accident. The UNLV Police Department has, however, asserted that there is no evidence to suggest that it was a case of homicide and that evidence so far showed that Srinivas Chirukuri may have accidently ignited himself. According to the police there are indications that the chemical used came from the laboratory itself. However, investigations are still continuing.

Reservation of SC/ST for Ambassador/High Commissioners

3899. SHRI RAM RATAN RAM : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) what is the number of Ambassadors including High Commissioners who are working under the Ministry of External Affairs;

(b) what is the number out of them who

belong to SC/ST community;

(c) whether there is reservation of SC/ST on the post of Ambassador/High Commissioners; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED): (a) Presently 105 Heads of Mission (Ambassadors/High Commissioners/Permanent Representatives) are in place in various Indian missions abroad.

(b) 15 belong to the SC/ST communities (SC: 9 and ST: 6).

(c) No Sir.

(d) Posts of Heads of Missions are filled by the Government by appointment of members of the Indian Foreign Service or any other person on functional grounds taking into account the experience and suitability of a person. Consequently a policy of reservation is not followed.

Delay in Issuing Passports

3900. SHRI ANANT RAM JAISWAL:
SHRI RAM GOPAL YADAV:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the average time taken to issue a passport in the normal course;

(b) whether the passport offices at Delhi, Chandigarh, Jallandar, Jaipur, Lucknow and Patna exceeded the normal time in the issuance of passports; and

(c) if so, the number of cases where the issuance of passports were delayed stating reasons therefor and the measures taken to avoid unnecessary delay?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) There is no standard average time for issue of a passport in the normal course because the time taken to issue a passport varies between different passport offices depending on the staff strength and the workload at different points of time.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

Sino-Indian Boundary Issue

3901. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been any headway so far in Sino-Indian talks for solution of the boundary question; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) and (b) Discussions on the boundary question between India and China are held in the India-China Joint Working Group set up in December, 1988 for this purpose. The Joint Working Group has held six meetings so far, the sixth meeting being held in New Delhi on June 25—28, 1993. In the meetings of the Joint Working Group, both sides have sought to narrow their differences on the boundary question in order to arrive at a fair, just and mutually acceptable solution. They have also made progress in their discussions on measures that could be taken to enhance mutual confidence and ensure peace and tranquillity along the line of actual control.

ताशकन्द में भारतीय ध्वज का उल्टा फहराया जाना

3902. श्री शंकर दयाल सिंह : क्या विदेश मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या यह सच है कि 25 मई, 1993 को प्रधानमंत्री की ताशकन्द यात्रा के समय भारतीय ध्वज उल्टा फहर रहा था;

(ख) क्या इस संबंध में प्रधान मंत्री जी ने भी अपनी नाराजगी व्यक्त की थी;

(ग) इस अशोभनीय कार्य का क्या कारण था तथा इसके लिए दोषी पाए गए व्यक्तियों के नाम क्या हैं; और

(घ) क्या इस संबंध में कोई कार्यवाही की गई है?

विदेश मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री सलमान खुर्शीद) : (क) से (ग) ताशकन्द स्थित भारत के राजदूतावास ने उजबेकिस्तान के विदेश मंत्रालय को एक औपचारिक मौखिक टिप्पण देकर यह बताया था कि भारत के राष्ट्रीय ध्वज को किस तरह फहराया जाना चाहिए । तथापि, 25 मई, 1993 को 05.15 बजे हमारे दूतावास के दो अधिकारियों ने यह देखा कि ताशकन्द हवाई अड्डे पर भारतीय ध्वज को उल्टा फहराया जा रहा है । उन्होंने तत्काल अधिकारियों का ध्यान इस ओर आकृष्ट किया था और उक्त अधिकारियों ने तुरन्त ही भूल का सुधार किया था । यह घटना 3 घण्टे बाद 08.30 बजे प्रधान मंत्री को दिए गए विदाई समारोह से काफी पहले घटी थी ।

(घ) प्रश्न नहीं उठता ।